



Livable Neighborhoods, Inc.

www.livable-neighborhoods.org

To improve and promote the livability
of all neighborhoods in the La Crosse area

2013 La Crosse Mayor/Council Candidate Survey

Livable Neighborhoods is a non-profit citizens group established in 1996. Our purpose is to improve and promote the livability of all neighborhoods in the La Crosse area. As part of our mission we encourage citizens to research and discuss important issues facing our community. Certainly one of the most important of those issues is who we should choose to represent us in local government.

The following questions have been developed to help La Crosse residents learn more about the candidates for Mayor and city council prior to the spring election. We are inviting each candidate to answer these questions with a 3- to 5-sentence response. The responses of all candidates will be collated and made available at <http://livable-neighborhoods.org> and in the local media. Your answers will be quoted without summary, editing or editorializing.

Please complete the survey by typing in your best answers to the **highlighted questions** in the row below. As you type, the row will expand, so you should not need to do any formatting. Or if you prefer, you may hand write your answers (please number) on a separate piece(s) of paper. Your response will be posted online and shared with the media exactly as you return it.

Please return your survey by Monday, March 18 to president@livable-neighborhoods.org. Or you may mail it to **Charley Weeth**, 122 17th St S, La Crosse, WI 54601-4208.

Questions? Please contact **Charley Weeth** at 784-3212 or **Charles Clemence** at 738-1736 or vp@livable-neighborhoods.org.

Thank you for your willingness to serve. And good luck in the upcoming elections.

Name: ___Peg Jerome_____

Address: ___1220 14th St. S., La Crosse, WI 54601_____

Phone: ___784-5496_____

Email: _____p.jerome1@gmail.com_____

Candidate for Mayor Candidate for Council Council District Number ___10___

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Questions

1. Political experience is helpful in governing a city, but effective leadership skills may be gained in many different ways. Please list the work, business, civic, or charitable experience that best demonstrates your ability to manage city operations

I have served on the County Board for one year now and have come to appreciate the complexity of local government. If people only knew what goes on in the background before anything is finalized, they would be amazed. I do research on issues that are new to me and I talk to employees and other county board members before making my decisions. I keep in mind not only what will be good for my district, but for the county as a whole. As for work, I worked in the Archives Department of the city library for eight years. Part of my job was to maintain files of city and county government meetings and actions. I have learned a lot from that job. I am also involved in 4H, so am familiar with that youth organization. I have helped to manage many different projects and groups of people. I feel fully capable of becoming a leader on the city council.

2. The City of La Crosse is facing budgetary problems stemming from increasing costs and stable or decreasing revenue. Assume the city is facing a situation where budgeted expenses are expected to exceed revenue by a significant amount. How would you address this shortfall?

A budget is an extremely complicated document, with many moving parts. One cannot simply look at one budget line item and make decisions. The document must be taken as a whole. I would like to analyze what goes on in every city department, looking especially for efficiencies. I believe the departments must work together more closely than ever before, to see what they can do to mesh with other departments more smoothly. We must also look at establishing more partnerships in the community, with other levels of government and with the private sector. Government simply cannot do everything that needs to be done to keep this city moving forward. Grant money should be sought as well.

3. What do you feel are the greatest problems facing La Crosse neighborhoods? How should the City focus its revitalization resources? Specifically, please discuss and rate the importance of the following factors:

- Aging and dilapidated housing stock.

This is at the heart of the housing problem. Half of our city homes are rental units, which often suffer from neglect. We need to beef up our inspection department and give them real tools to help bring properties up to par.

- Attracting middle class residents to La Crosse neighborhoods.

As our neighborhoods improve, we must market our city better with the help of local businesses. We need to show employees of those businesses why it is so rewarding to live in the city of La Crosse. We should be working with Personnel Departments of our major businesses, and should reach out to small businesses through organizations like LADCO and Downtown Mainstreet.

- Developing job and business opportunities for residents.

The city is making progress in this area, with the cooperation of the above mentioned organizations and others. We need to develop blocks of land within the city, like the Mobil Oil site, the Rubber Mills lot, and the old Navy Recruiting Office. There is land available, but much of it needs work. Let's stop delaying and get those parcels of land back on the tax rolls. We can attract businesses and homeowners this way.

- Neighborhood institutions (parks, schools, libraries, civic organizations, etc.).

We have two fine neighborhood center buildings in town and we should look at developing more. Our

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parks, libraries, and schools are all solidly attractive to prospective home buyers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensing landlords, limiting the conversion of owner occupied homes to rentals, etc.
Much has been tried in this city to improve our rental properties, but our efforts have met with resistance. We need to beef up our inspection department. We need to develop a better relationship with landlords and the Apartment Association. We need to offer them help in finding resources to better their properties.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please sum up your approach to stabilizing and improving La Crosse’s neighborhoods.
The city council needs to work with neighborhood associations, civic groups, and citizens to build more pride in our city. We have so much to offer and we have not maximized our potential for growth. Paint and fix up programs have helped, along with the city’s program to build more houses in poor neighborhoods. Somehow, we also have to address the poverty that creates downtrodden neighborhoods. We have many tools in place; we just need to keep expanding and marketing those programs.
4. La Crosse is blessed with a unique and varied natural environment. While this is a great benefit, it can also pose challenges to expanding the tax base.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should the city strictly apply its development standards within three miles of its border as allowed by law and laid out in the comprehensive plan?
Absolutely. Our comprehensive plan is a good one and we should be following it. Sometimes towns on the periphery of the city make decisions that harm the city of La Crosse. We need to build closer relationships with those entities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should the City create development strategies or growth plans for surrounding towns?
We should establish partnerships with surrounding towns, but we can’t do all the work for them.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should the City consider extending sewer or water services without requiring annexation?
One of the biggest benefits of annexation is access to city water and sewer. Let’s keep working on annexations where they are advantageous. Perhaps we could negotiate with others that resist annexation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you support continued funding of the bluffland acquisition program?
Absolutely. The blufflands are one of the two greatest natural assets we have, the other being the Mississippi River. MVC has done a great job and we should continue to work with them and others to keep our blufflands safe and beautiful.
5. The north-south corridor remains part of the La Crosse Area Planning Commission and the Department of Transportation’s long-range transportation plan for the La Crosse area. This despite the 1998 referendum turning down the 5B-1 proposal.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you believe there is a need for new north-south road through the city of La Crosse?
No.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you believe other projects, such as the proposed extension of 12th Avenue S in Onalaska to State Hwy 16 or the proposed traffic roundabout at 7th & Cass, should be developed as alternatives to a new corridor?
We need to be careful that some of those projects don’t become building blocks for a north-south corridor, which the state seems intent on building. 7 th and Cass is a good example of that. We need to continue to improve our public transportation, work with businesses to set variable work hours to

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decrease congested traffic, and we need to work on stoplight synchronization.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you believe the city should pursue measures to curb use of single occupancy vehicles as alternatives to a new road? For example, regulation of neighborhood parking, special fees and assessments for parking, and encouraging alternatives (walking, biking, car pools, mass transit etc.).
<p>Alternatives are one of the best ways of approaching this problem. We are becoming more aware of energy issues and other issues that make walking and biking good alternatives. We have a good bus system and we should continue to make that stronger. Carpooling ideas are things we should be working with employers on.</p>
<p>6. How would you promote the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the City?</p>
<p>I like the yellow crossing signs we have in the city, but many of them are covered in tread marks. Flashing lights at pedestrian crossings are helping, as are buttons pedestrians can push to stop traffic momentarily. We need to continue to educate the public and crack down on those drivers who are reckless at pedestrian crossings. Sharrows and bike lanes have already enhanced bicycle traffic.</p>
<p>7. Recently La Crosse has seen a disturbing increase of accidental deaths and other serious problems related to alcohol abuse. What do you think the city's role is in stopping and reversing this trend?</p>
<p>The city is a partner in the Changing the Culture of Risky Drinking and should remain active in that organization. We need to continue to work with schools, civic organizations, the health department, and bar owners. There is still much more progress to be made on these issues.</p>
<p>8. There has also been a recent series of violent deaths, assaults, and drug related crimes in the city. Does La Crosse have a problem with the growth of serious crime? What measures would you take to improve public safety in this area?</p>
<p>Overall, crime is actually down in this country and in La Crosse. We have had some horrific deaths recently that make people feel unsafe, but they need to be looked at through the lens of overall crime. Our police make a huge effort to keep us safe. There are drug problems, and there always will be, as people continue to look to substances to make them feel better. We are making progress in the way we treat drug problems. We just need to keep going and not lose heart.</p>
<p>9. Historic preservation has become a popular method for neighborhood revitalization in La Crosse. The city currently has several historic districts and dozens of designated properties. However, all requests to demolish historic buildings have been approved by the city council.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should the historic status of a building have an impact on whether it is demolished?
<p>Yes it should.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What criteria should the city use to evaluate the impact of a development on historic properties?
<p>The value of the historic site needs to be weighed carefully with the perceived impact of new developments. The city should be doing more to help owners keep historic sites maintained.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should the city provide funding and/or technical help for property owners to maintain and renovate historic buildings?
<p>The city should seek grant funding to help in this effort. We should also be approaching businesses and citizens to set up funds to renovate historic buildings. We have saved several and it has definitely been worth the effort.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should the city's ordinance be changed to give the Heritage Preservation Commission more than just advisory authority over designated properties?
<p>The Heritage Preservation Commission should be taken more seriously. Perhaps advisory authority would be enough if the city council would work more cooperatively with them.</p>
<p>10. Do you think the City has assisted or thwarted attempts at regional cooperation? What direction</p>

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would you give department heads to encourage such cooperation?
The County has undertaken many collaborative endeavors. The city needs to continue to be involved in those efforts. Department heads can lead the charge in building communication with other bodies of government. Duplication of services needs to be eliminated. We should seriously look at a more cooperative approach to public safety.
11. Public opinion polls show that most people want to cut the size and cost of government, but there is no consensus on where to cut and how much. What is your approach to spending and taxes? Would your goal be to decrease taxes, hold them steady, or allow for some increase?
The state and federal governments have given us little choice about raising taxes. We need to continue to look for streamlining opportunities and efficiencies within and between departments. Taxes are no one's favorite thing, but they are necessary to provide the services that people need.
12. A large part of the cost for providing city services is currently borne by property taxpayers. The city has the ability under state statutes to establish utility districts and user fees so all property owners pay for the services provided and received.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you support creation of a utility for fire protection? A fire protection utility would charge to all property owners based on the level of fire protection needed.
I would need to look into this more deeply before making a decision. I would like to see examples of other municipalities that have gone down that road. I hesitate to do anything to endanger the superior level of fire protection that we in La Crosse enjoy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should the city look to fees and fines as a source of revenue or as a cost recovery device only?
Fees should cover the cost of providing services. They should not be counted on as a revenue stream.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently there is a controversial plan to raise fees relating for all types of city services. Do you think current fees are adequate or should they be raised?
Current fees need to be examined to see if they cover the cost of administering the service they provide.
13. La Crosse voters soundly defeated a proposal to hire a city administrator. However we are in a shrinking group of cities without professional administrative expertise. Do you think the referendum settled the issue of a city administrator or should the discussion continue?
The city voters have spoken out on that issue. It does not need to be resurrected. The city would be run more efficiently if the mayor and the city council worked together better.
14. The Joint City-County Housing Task Force identified a number of actions aimed at that it felt would help the revitalize neighborhoods and expand the tax base. The number one recommendation was "Better education and enforcement of existing codes and standards". Do you agree? If so, how what changes would you suggest be made at City Hall?
I think better enforcement is a good place to start. The inspection department has been cut so much that it can't do its job to the level needed. If we are serious about revitalizing neighborhoods, we need to start there.
15. Finally, what do you want voters to know that haven't been brought out by our questions? What experience, ideas, qualities, etc. do you have that make you the better choice?
I am a good listener, I research before making decisions, and I am deeply committed to this city that has been home to me and my family for so long.